



# News Release

**GEORGE LATIMER, Westchester County Executive**

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
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## **WESTCHESTER COUNTY OBSERVES WORLD AIDS DAY DECEMBER 1**

### ***Westchester County Health Department Offers Testing and Preventive Services***

(White Plains, NY) – On World AIDS Day, the Westchester County Department of Health joins with other community partners united in the fight against HIV to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Westchester Community Health Center, formerly the Mount Vernon Neighborhood Health Center, for its dedicated service to the people of Westchester County. Each year on December 1, Westchester County shows support for people living with HIV, and remembers those lost to the disease.

A Federally Qualified Health Center, the Westchester Community Health Center has cared for people living with HIV and AIDS since the start of the HIV epidemic and has been federally funded for this work since 1990, when Congress enacted the Ryan White Comprehensive AIDS Resources Emergency Act, the largest federal program for people living with HIV/AIDS.

From its roots in Mount Vernon, which has been disproportionately affected by HIV/AIDS, the Westchester Community Health Center has expanded to offer comprehensive medical care, case management and social services at eight locations throughout Westchester.

County Executive George Latimer said: “I congratulate the Westchester Community Health Center for a half century of service. We all appreciate the compassionate care provided by the healthcare professionals, advocates and agencies who are dedicated to helping everyone affected by this disease.”

Health Commissioner Sherlita Amler, MD, said: “On this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and every day, we are grateful for the important and essential work done by our valued partner, the Westchester Community Health Center, and we look forward to continued collaboration on behalf of Westchester residents.”

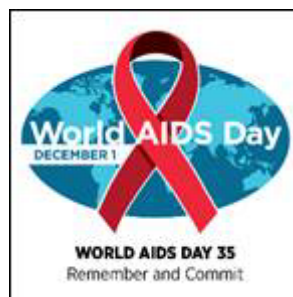
Free rapid and regular HIV testing and PrEP (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis), are offered at the County Health Department Clinics, at 134 Court Street in White Plains and on the second floor at 20 South Broadway, Yonkers. Residents can call 995-5800 for dates and times or check the clinic schedule at [www.westchestergov.com/health](http://www.westchestergov.com/health).

Through a partnership with the Urban League of Westchester, the Health Department also offers free, rapid HIV testing on-site at the Syringe Exchange Program, 4 Wilson Place, Mount Vernon. PrEP is a preventive treatment that when taken daily can prevent HIV in people who are most at risk and PEP or post-exposure prophylaxis, is medicine taken to prevent HIV after a possible exposure.

An estimated 1.2 million Americans are living with HIV, and 13 percent of them are not aware of their diagnosis and need for testing, according to HIV.GOV. The Westchester County Department of Health reminds residents to get tested for the disease. HIV continues to have a disproportionate impact on racial and ethnic minorities and gay, bisexual and other men who have sex with men. Although there are effective treatments for HIV, there is still no cure for HIV and no vaccine to prevent it.

The World AIDS Day Event will take place December 1 from 12 p.m. to 3 p.m. at Grace Baptist Church, 52 South Sixth Avenue, Mount Vernon. Participation is free and open to the public and will include a panel discussion on health equity. The keynote speaker is Cecilia Dean, RPA, HIV Specialist; other speakers include Judith Watson RN, BSN, MPH, CEO of the Westchester Community Health Center; Reena Agarwal, MD; Urmi Desai, MD; and Japera Williams, M.S., Ed.; from the Westchester County Health Department. The event is cosponsored by the Westchester County Department of Health; the Westchester Community Health Center and LBH Consulting; with support from Westchester Alumnae Chapter of the Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.; and ViiV Healthcare.

In keeping with this year's theme, "World AIDS Day 35: Collaborating for Change: Partnering for Health Equity," the event will highlight HIV treatment today, Health Equity and PrEP for people at risk for HIV via sexual transmission. Topics include partnerships developed to address inequities such as access to quality health care/services, safe housing and environments, nutritious food and quality education.



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